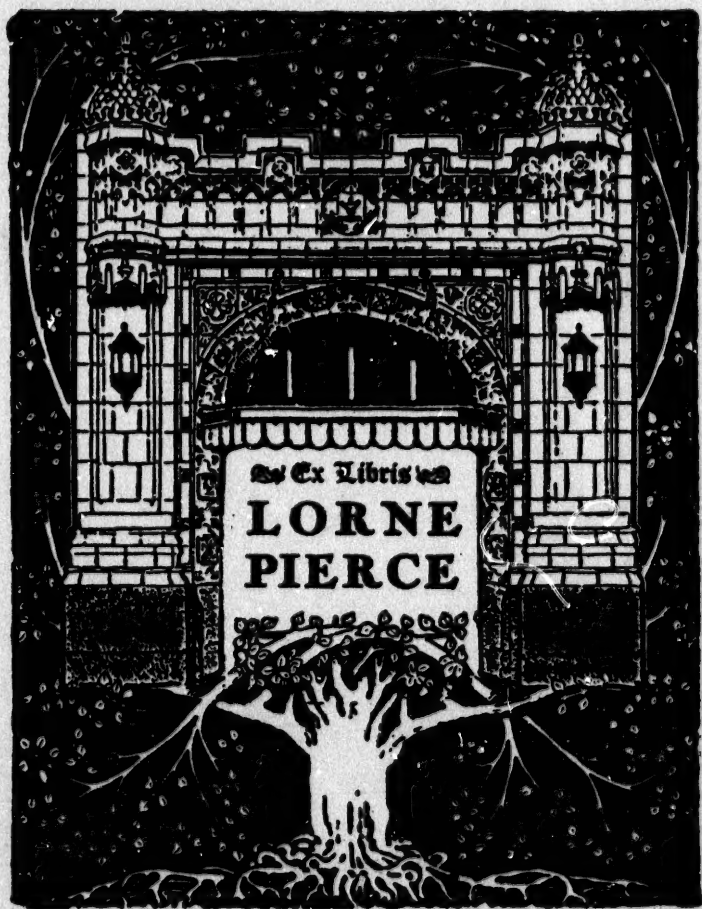


AT MICHAELMAS.



At Michaelmas

A Lyric

By Bliss Carman

1895

LP PS 8455. A84 A8

c. 2.

To T. B. M.

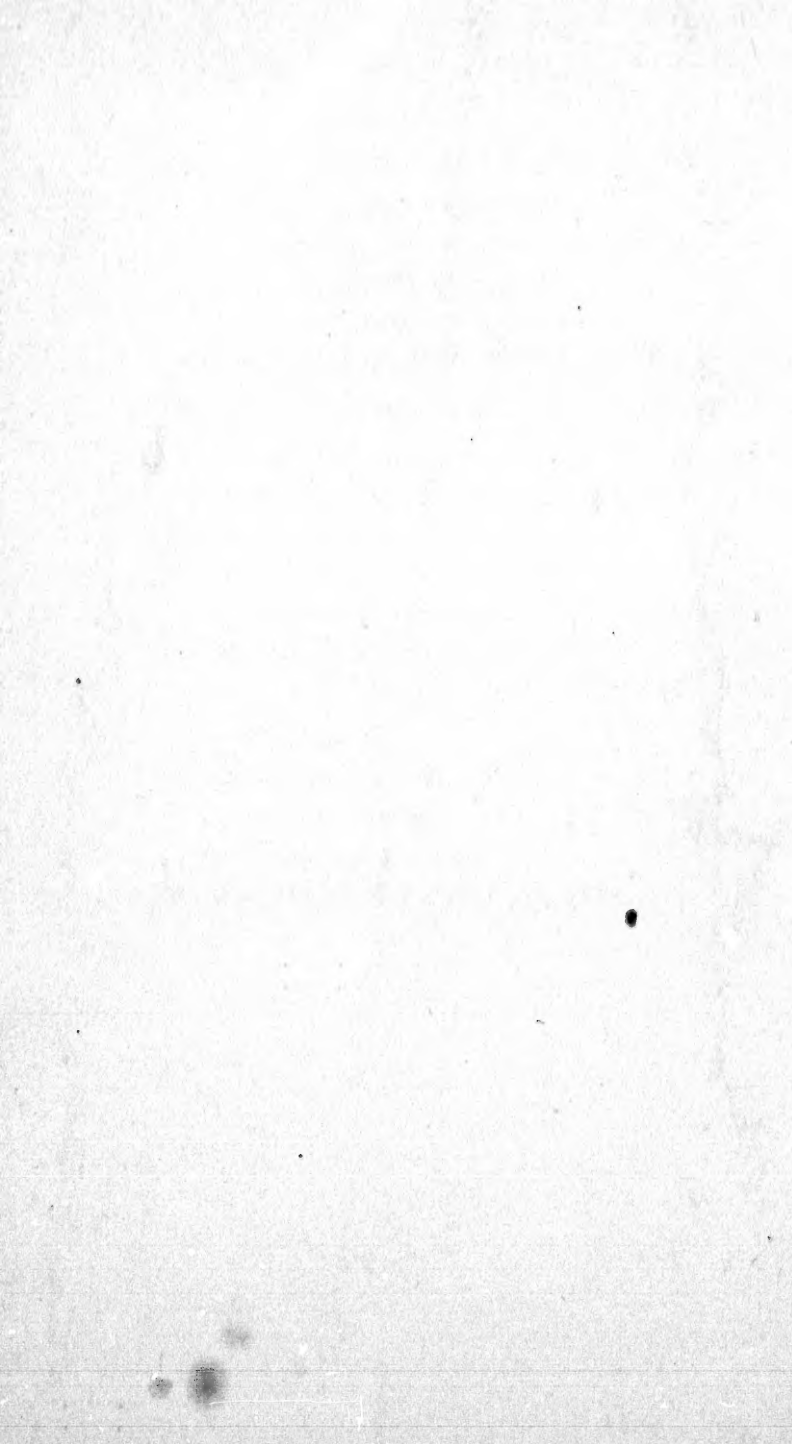
*For every one
Beneath the sun,
Where Autumn walks with quiet eyes,
There is a word,
Just overheard
When hill to purple hill replies
This afternoon
As warm as June,
With the red apples on the bough,
I set my ear
To hark, and hear
The wood-folk talking, you know how.*

*There comes a "Hush !"
And then a "Tush,"
As tree to scarlet tree responds,
"Babble away !
He'll not betray
The secrets of us vagabonds.*

*"Are we not all,
Both great and small,
Cousins and kindred in a joy
No school can teach,
No worldling reach.
Nor any wreck of chance destroy ?"*

*And so, we are,
However far
We journey ere the journey ends,
One brotherhood
With leaf and bud
And every thing that wakes or wends.*

*The breath that blows
My Autumn rose
Through apple lands of Acadie,
Talks in the leaves
About your eaves,
Where Tortoise Shell looks out to sea.*



AT MICHAELMAS.

About the time of Michael's feast

And all his angels,

There comes a word to man and beast

By dark evangels.

Then hearing what the wild things say

To one another,

Those creatures firstborn of our gray

Mysterious Mother,

The greatness of the world's unrest

Steals through our pulses ;

Our own life takes a meaning guessed

From the torn dulse's.

The draft and set of deep sea tides

Swirling and flowing,

Bears every filmy flake that rides

Grandly unknowing.

The sunlight listens ; thin and fine
The crickets whistle ;
And floating midges fill the shine
Like a seeding thistle.

The hawkbit flies his golden flag
From rocky pasture,
Bidding his legions never lag
Through morning's vasture.

Soon we shall see the red vines ramp
Through forest borders,
And Indian summer breaking camp
To silent orders.

The glossy chestnuts swell and burst
Their prickly houses,
Agog at news which reached them first
In sap's carouses.

The long noons turr the ribstons red,
The pippins yellow ;
The wild duck from his reedy bed
Summons his fellow.

The robins keep the underbrush,
Songless and wary,
As though they feared some frostier
hush

Might bid them tarry ;

Perhaps in the great north they heard
Of silence falling
Upon the world without a word,
White and appalling.

The ash tree and the lady fern,
In russet frondage,
Proclaim 'tis time for our return
To vagabondage.

All summer idle have we kept ;
But on a morning,
Where the blue hazy mountain slept,
A scarlet warning

Disturbs our day-dream with a start ;
A leaf turns over ;
And every earthling is at heart
Once more a rover.

All winter we shall toil and plod,
Eating and drinking ;
But now's the little time when God
Sets folk a-thinking.

"Consider," says the quiet sun,
"How far I wander ;
Yet when had I not time on one
More flower to squander ?"

"Consider," says the restless tide,
"My endless labor ;
Yet when was I content beside
My nearest neighbor ?"

So wander-lust to wander-lure,
As seed to season,
Must rise and wend, possessed and sure
In sweet unreason.

For doorstone and repose are good,
And kind is duty ;
But joy is in the solitude
With shy-heart beauty.

And truth is one whose ways are meek
Beyond foretelling ;
Yet they must journey far who seek
Her lowly dwelling.

Broad are the eaves, the hearth is warm,
And wide the portal ;
And there is shelter from the storm
For every mortal.

She leads him by a thousand heights,
Lonelily faring,
With sunrise and with eagle flights
To mate his daring.

For her he fronts a vaster fog
Than Leif of yore did,
Voyaging for continents no log
Has yet recorded.

He travels by a polar star,
Now bright, now hidden,
For a free land, though rest be far
And roads forbidden.

Till on a day with sweet coarse bread
And wine she stays him,
Then in a cool and narrow bed
To slumber lays him.

So we are hers ; and, fellows mine
Of fin and feather,
By shady wood and shadowy brine,
When comes the weather

For migrants to be moving on,
By lost indenture
You flock and gather and are gone :
The old adventure !

I too have my unwritten date,
My gipsy presage ;
And on the brink of fall I wait
The darkling message.

The sign, from prying eyes concealed,
Is yet how flagrant !
Here's ragged-robin in the field,
A simple vagrant.

*Written at The Little Red House in
the Orchard, and privately printed in
one hundred copies at "The Acadian"
Press, Wolfville, Nova Scotia, during
October, 1895.*